

## HEARTS N' PARKS: 4TH P—PARTNERING

Consider pursuing partnerships. One of the powerful aspects of Hearts N' Parks is its potential to make the most of existing community resources AND to extend the reach of important information to your community. Partnering goes a long way toward making that a reality.

### THE PARTNERSHIP ADVANTAGE

Partnering is powerful because it holds the potential for making things happen that:

- Could **not** have happened with one agency acting on its own
- Would **not** have happened as efficiently or successfully if partners had not joined together.

It's never too soon to start thinking about partnering. Partners can be a big help to moving a project forward because they can provide:

- Access to a target audience you might not currently reach
- Greater credibility for your message or program
- Additional resources, either tangible or intangible
- Added expertise
- Potential cosponsorship of programs and events.

### PARTNERSHIP POSSIBILITIES

Every community possesses a unique richness of resources. Explore the resources that might serve as possible partners in Hearts N' Parks.

They might include:

- Public departments and agencies, such as health departments, school districts, police departments, fire departments, etc.
- Health-related agencies, hospitals, visiting nurses, emergency services
- Nonprofit agencies, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, local chapters of AARP
- Churches and religious groups
- Affiliates of national organizations—American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, etc.
- Private sector—grocery stores, sporting goods stores, fitness centers
- Neighborhood and community groups
- Service clubs, such as Rotary, Lions, etc.

The best prospective partners are those who share a common interest in your mission. Partners are those who can bring something to the process that you or other partners are not capable of providing.

Take a moment to:

- Brainstorm the names of individuals and agencies that might be interested in being a part of this effort.
- Think of organizations or groups you might not have been involved with previously, such as hospitals, grocery stores, the health department, or police and fire departments.
- Ask other staff or your current partners for additions to your potential partner list.

# SOS

## *Signs of Success*

**Most of the partnerships in North Carolina involved hospitals, healthcare and fitness centers, and health departments. There were also partnerships with local restaurants and businesses, police departments, a mayor's council for substance abuse, and USA Tennis. A few examples:**

- The Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department in Charlotte, operated many adult and youth programs, ranging in duration from 8 to 10 weeks. The "Walk for Life" senior walking program culminated with a walk in which participants tested their endurance by walking several miles from Charlotte to the local outlet mall. For the 1,800 youths involved in summer day camp programs, the department partnered with USA Tennis to focus on the health benefits of participating in lifelong sports like tennis. The youths participated in a healthy lunch program that challenged them to "go around the world in 80 days by sampling various cuisines." Winners were awarded prizes and given coupons for active places to visit, such as bowling alleys and skating rinks. Sponsorship with local Subway sandwich shops was part of the Hearts N' Parks partnering mix.



- The Winston-Salem Parks and Recreation Department partnered with the Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center to provide blood pressure and cholesterol checks for adults in the "Healthy Strider" mall-walking program. The hospital used a storefront in the mall to provide walkers with healthy snacks and information. This program was 4 weeks long and had about 40 participants.

- The Smithfield Parks and Recreation Department established a partnership with the Johnston County Health Department and the Looking Good Fitness Center to provide a 6-week senior exercise program.

The Health Department conducted blood pressure, cholesterol, and body fat screenings for participants. Participants were also given information about health, fitness, and nutrition as part of the Hearts N' Parks program.



- In Raleigh, the summer Youth Basketball League, a joint venture of the Raleigh Police Department and the Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department, gave approximately 25 teens the opportunity to learn about health and fitness while having fun. Hearts N' Parks provided an opportunity to include good nutrition and physical activity as part of the program with guest speakers, such as a personal trainer and a football player. The Parks and Recreation Department arranged for fruit and a healthy beverage to be served after basketball games through a partnership with the local bottling company.



- Lindsey Dunevant, Director of the Albemarle Parks and Recreation Department, called Karen Brown at the Stanley Memorial Hospital and received an enthusiastic "yes" to partnering before he attended the first Hearts N' Parks meeting. These partners went on to develop a 1-month "Walk About" program for adults. The program included walks with health education professionals, screenings for blood pressure and blood glucose, stress management seminars, healthy eating classes, and strength training.





## SIGNS OF SUCCESS (CONTINUED)

- The Town of Fletcher Parks and Recreation Department partnered with a variety of community organizations to give day camp participants the opportunity to hear from experts in nutrition and exercise. Partners included a local fitness club, the Henderson County Partnership for Health, the American Red Cross, the Cooperative Extension Service, and the Henderson County Health Department. Partners and staff gave talks, conducted demonstrations, and led games, activities, and exercises that emphasized the importance of a heart-healthy lifestyle.
- The Madison-Mayodan Recreation Department teamed with a local restaurant that provided nutritional information about items on its menu to children in the Hearts N' Parks program. The children ate at the restaurant, and staff used the nutritional information to talk about making healthy food choices when eating out.



## GETTING STARTED

Creating new relationships or reinforcing existing partnerships can generate strong interest in Hearts N' Parks. But you can't build upon this interest until you ask people to join you.

Be the change agent for healthy behavior in your community and call a meeting to recruit the many valuable assets from within your community.

Be the one to:

- Mail a letter to potential partners explaining the program and asking about their interest. Be sure to include the Hearts N' Parks information and fact sheets.
- Schedule a meeting with potential partners. Be sure to make use of the Hearts N' Parks

video and suggested agenda for that first meeting.

## TYPES OF PARTNERING OPPORTUNITIES

There are lots of partnering opportunities, including:

**Communication:** Information and insight sharing conducted formally at a monthly or annual meeting or informally through networking and phone trees.

**Coordination:** Programs and services offered to either address an important community issue or avoid replication of services and resources.

**Cooperation:** Exchange of resources of some kind—building, staff, publicity, equipment, or access to different target groups.

## Resources



### Resources to help you get started include:

- Additional Resources for Your Hearts N' Parks Program (appendix D)
- Sample Invitation Letter with suggested enclosures (at the end of the chapter)
- Sample Agenda for Initial Meeting (at the end of the chapter)

## Do you know?



There are steps and suggestions for creating and working with partners as follows:

- Involve representatives of partnering organizations as early as possible in the planning process.
- Provide them with the Hearts N' Parks mission, strategies, and materials in a readily usable format.
- Give partners advance notice so they can rework their program schedules around the new initiatives.
- Determine what types of resources or assistance they might need; aside from just money, consider training, information, or other forms of assistance.
- Provide them with contacts and linkages to the NHLBI and the NRPA so they realize the potential value of Hearts N' Parks for their organizations.
- Keep initial efforts manageable; don't take on too much too soon.
- Create a way to gently remind people of their responsibilities.
- Develop a feedback mechanism so activities can stay on track and adjustments can be made quickly.

**Collaboration:** Usually a combination of some or all of the above. The partners share information, communicate between themselves, coordinate programs and efforts, and share resources and responsibility for addressing the common purpose that brought them together.

*Now is a good time to decide who your partners in Hearts N' Parks may be and to determine what types of partnering alternatives you will jointly pursue.*

### MOVING FORWARD

A twofold approach to making the most of existing resources includes a **Program/Service Assessment** and an **Outcomes/Opportunity Action Framework**.

#### Program/Service Assessment

Before your agency and your partners decide to create new programs, you need to look at those currently being offered. Conduct a quick assessment of heart-healthy related offerings or programs that could incorporate such activities. Determine whether all aspects of heart-healthy behavior are being addressed and that all members of the community have access to such

programs. You should look at your programs to find out if they have the following characteristics:

- All age groups
- Provide for men, women, and children
- Are offered at various locations
- Are offered at different days and times
- Are affordable
- Provide ease of access to all
- Take account of the need for personal safety.

The following checklist, **Program/Service Assessment of Basic Elements and Offerings**, can be completed by your agency and your partners. It will give you an initial picture of what is happening or not happening in terms of heart-healthy behavior in your community. It will also serve as a good starting point for the next phase, when you identify desirable outcomes.

Remember that elements such as affordability, ease of access, and perceived comfort and safety levels need to be discussed. They cannot be addressed easily through a checklist.

## Program/Service Assessment of Basic Elements and Offerings

**Step 1: Current Programs and Services Offered** (number programs for easy reference below)

- |    |     |     |
|----|-----|-----|
| 1. | 6.  | 11. |
| 2. | 7.  | 12. |
| 3. | 8.  | 13. |
| 4. | 9.  | 14. |
| 5. | 10. | 15. |

**Step 2: Review Programs** on the basis of which target groups and community locations are addressed by the programs listed in **Step 1**. Be sure to classify the programs according to whether they focus on providing a heart-healthy activity or only have *some elements* related to heart-healthy behavior. This chart allows you to see what elements you are including or missing. Some programs may be entered in more than one category.

Place an asterisk (\*) by program name to indicate occasional programs.

Program Name or Number _____	Focus		Elements of	
	Physical Activity	Heart-Healthy Eating	Physical Activity	Heart-Healthy Eating
Children: Male Female				
Teens: Male Female				
Adults: Male Female				
Seniors: Male Female				
At-Risk Groups (specify) _____ _____				
Non-Participants (specify) _____ _____				
Location (specify areas or neighborhoods) _____ _____				

## *Program/Services Assessment Outcomes/Opportunity Framework*

The completion of this assessment is intended to identify desirable outcomes and opportunities for Hearts N' Park initiatives. The Outcomes/Opportunity Action Framework form does just that. It serves as a framework to move forward.

Review the results of your assessment with your staff and your partners to identify gaps and duplications. By not replicating similar programs, you can save time, energy, and money. By offering programs at different times and locations for different groups of people, you may break through a number of other barriers as well.

### **People:**

Groups who do NOT have regular, ongoing opportunities for physical activity:

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 4. |
| 2. | 5. |
| 3. | 6. |

Groups who do NOT have regular, ongoing opportunities to learn about heart-healthy nutrition:

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 4. |
| 2. | 5. |
| 3. | 6. |

Groups who are at high risk for CVD and are not participating in current programs:

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 4. |
| 2. | 5. |
| 3. | 6. |

### **Programs:**

Successful programs with a heart-healthy focus that could be expanded to reach more people:

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 4. |
| 2. | 5. |
| 3. | 6. |

Programs with potential for adding or enhancing heart-healthy elements for current participants:

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 4. |
| 2. | 5. |
| 3. | 6. |



Programs without a heart-healthy focus that could be expanded to include heart-healthy physical activity or information about a heart-healthy diet:

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 4. |
| 2. | 5. |
| 3. | 6. |

Heart-healthy information and strategies that are NOT sufficiently targeted and could be expanded: (check as many as apply)

Information:    Importance of CVD  
                    Risk factors for CVD  
                    Personal role in reducing risk

Activity:        Physical activity  
                    Heart-healthy eating

**Opportunity/Action Areas:**

Identify programs or services, existing or new, that present either an opportunity for motivating heart-healthy behavior or areas where new programs should be created.

Target Group Program	Expansion of Existing Program	Creation of New Program



## *Do you know?*

As in any human interaction, misunderstandings can arise in partnerships. These may include:

### **Participation**

- Participation dominated by one group or person
- Participation by partner(s) is unenthusiastic
- Attendance and involvement are sporadic

### **Personal**

- Personality clashes or ideological differences among partners
- Inability to compromise
- Unrealistic expectations
- Real or perceived loss of authority by one or more partners

### **Philosophy**

- Disagreements over values, methods, or actions
- Past history of differences
- Organizational policies do not lend themselves to cooperative efforts

### **Practicalities**

- Activities or resources put too large a burden on one agency

If you acknowledge these challenges and address them, chances of long-lasting partnering are increased.

## **MOVING TO ACTION**

Two techniques for keeping partnership projects on track include a Partnership Plan and a Tracking Mechanism.

A partnership plan enables all participants to agree on the specifics of the project; a tracking mechanism provides a way to monitor achievement of goals.

## **Partnership Project Plan**

How formal and official you choose to be may relate to the size of the cooperative effort or the needs of the various partners. Use the following guidelines and information to create this plan.





## *Hearts N' Parks* *Partnership Project Plan*

### **Overall Purpose of Hearts N' Parks Partnering:**

To bring together existing community resources and assets to improve the overall health and quality of life for residents of the community through increased information and access to physical activity and healthy eating.

### **Brief Description of Cooperative Program or Project:**

### **Participating Partners (list names of all involved):**

### **Desired Outcome(s) of the Program/Project (can include a focus on a particular group or set of information or behavior):**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Major Activities/Action Needed for Program/Project:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.



## Partnership Project Plan (continued)

### Needed Resources: Partner(s) Providing the Resource:

Access to People

Training

Communication

Expertise

Facility

Funding

Staff

### Actions for Implementation:

<u>Action/Step</u>	<u>By Whom</u>	<u>By When</u>	<u>How Tracked</u>
--------------------	----------------	----------------	--------------------

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

# Tracking.....→

**Name of Project:**

**Proposed Action Steps (include proposed completion date):**

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 4. |
| 2. | 5. |
| 3. | 6. |

Please take a few moments and reflect as to how these specific activities or actions related to your Hearts N' Parks project are progressing. Consider the categories below in describing the progress of these activities:



**Tow Truck-**  
"Stalled, no  
movement"



**Snail-**  
"Moving at  
a very slow pace"



**Car in Motion-**  
"Moving right along"



**Rocket Ship-**  
"Really taking off"

Once you select the appropriate visual category, see if you can detect the underlying reason or cause for either the challenge or success of this part of the project. On the basis of that identification, please describe a suggested action.

**1. Needed Action Step #1 (specify):**

Category Designation:

Reason/Cause:

Suggested Action:

**4. Needed Action Step #4 (specify):**

Category Designation:

Reason/Cause:

Suggested Action:

**2. Needed Action Step #2 (specify):**

Category Designation:

Reason/Cause:

Suggested Action:

**5. Needed Action Step #5 (specify):**

Category Designation:

Reason/Cause:

Suggested Action:

**3. Needed Action Step #3 (specify):**

Category Designation:

Reason/Cause:

Suggested Action:

**6. Needed Action Step #6 (specify):**

Category Designation:

Reason/Cause:

Suggested Action:

## Do you know?



Partnering is truly a group venture and the unofficial guidelines for group dynamics suggest that there are four phases of group behavior as follows:

- Forming—coming together
- Norming—establishing a framework
- Storming—encountering difficulties and disagreements, and
- Performing—making the project come to life.

It is likely that your partnership experience will move through most, if not all, of these phases. Some suggestions for each of the phases include:

### **Forming**

Make the most of your opportunity to be a community change agent. Make a list of all those who might be interested in the goals of Hearts N' Parks and invite them to an initial meeting.

#### *Helpful Hints:*

- Try to include all potential partners at the first meeting.
- Send out information on Hearts N' Parks before the first meeting.
- Have a written agenda and a list of desired outcomes for the first meeting.

### **Norming**

Allow time for the individuals representing the various partners time to get to know one another. The more everyone understands the mission and strengths and different approaches of members of the group, the better.

#### *Helpful Hints:*

- Move the location of the meetings around to each of the partners to provide a sense of ownership and inclusion.
- Try to involve all members of the group so as to not overshadow or leave out those who are less vocal or direct than others.
- Take the time to work out the ways in which the group wants to communicate with one another and function as a group.

### **Storming**

This is potentially the most important phase. Disagreements are bound to arise. If addressed, working through this phase can improve the final outcome.

#### *Helpful Hints:*

- Refer partners to the original plan and see if changes or adjustments are in order; don't blame when you can reframe.
- Have a concise agenda and planned outcomes for each meeting so members don't get sidetracked.
- Use a tracking mechanism to address problems and offer suggested alternatives.

### **Performing**

When moving from planning to action, be sure that all partners are clear about the goals of the project and the role they will play. Since you are likely to have media coverage at this point, be sure to recognize the roles, involvement, and impact of your partners.

## *Countdown Checklist: 4th P—Partnering*

### **GETTING STARTED**

- \_\_\_ Review list of current and past partners for possible involvement with Hearts N' Parks.
- \_\_\_ Ask staff and current partners to suggest names of possible partners.
- \_\_\_ Set a date for initial meeting and invite potential partners to attend.
- \_\_\_ Hold initial meeting and determine level of interest and possible involvement.

### **MOVING FORWARD**

- \_\_\_ At second meeting, expand the number of partners and garner a more definite level of support; suggest conducting an assessment to determine areas of possible cooperation.
- \_\_\_ At the third meeting, review the assessment to determine program or service opportunities.
- \_\_\_ Decide upon one or more specific partnering ventures, such as joint staff training, cosponsoring a special event, etc.
- \_\_\_ Agree on partnership plan.

### **KEEP THE BEAT**

- \_\_\_ Plan methods of communication and networking.
- \_\_\_ Update the tracking mechanism regularly.
- \_\_\_ Remind yourself and your partners to acknowledge challenges or difficulties right away so that they can be addressed.
- \_\_\_ Make a strong effort to thank and give recognition to Hearts N' Parks partners.
- \_\_\_ Review the success of initial partnerships and plan additional partnerships.

## *Sample Invitation to Possible Partners* (department letterhead)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Our department is involved in a Hearts N' Parks program sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health and the National Recreation and Park Association. The purpose of the program is to improve the overall health and quality of life of our community by promoting heart-healthy eating and physical activity.

A major component of the program is effective and efficient use of community resources. Recognizing your organization's involvement in the community, we would like to invite you to learn more about this program and to explore the possibility of collaborating with us to achieve these goals.

A number of organizations and agencies within our community are being invited to attend a meeting on

*Date and Time*

*Location*

We hope that you or a representative from your organization can attend.

Enclosed is a fact sheet about "Hearts N' Parks" as well as "Health Statistics About Cardiovascular Disease." If you have any questions, please give me a call at (fill in your phone number). We look forward to seeing you at the meeting.

Sincerely,

## *Sample Agenda for Initial Partnering Meeting*

1. **Call to order** (department head, if possible or appropriate)
2. **Self Introductions of Participants and Organizations Represented**
3. **Overview of Hearts N' Parks** (program coordinator)
  - Expanded purpose of program
  - Examples of activities from North Carolina and Arlington pilot sites
  - Use of new and existing programs and services
4. **Roles in Partnership**
  - Communication
  - Coordination
  - Cooperation
  - Collaboration
5. **Where do we go from here?** (group participation)
  - Determine level of interest.
  - Identify other potential partner suggestions.
  - Arrange next meeting date and time; invite potential partner to host.
  - Identify information to be prepared for next meeting.
6. **“On time” adjournment**

## *Frequently Asked* **Questions**



### **1 Does a partnership have to be approved by Hearts N' Parks?**

No, but keep the NRPA and the NHLBI informed about who your partners are and how your program develops.

### **2 Can we enter into a partnership with an organization whose purposes are not of a heart-healthy nature?**

Yes, but the reason for having a partnership is that partners will share resources and work together to promote each other's programs. You don't want to be in a partnership if it doesn't benefit your program or sends the wrong message. Don't run the risk of getting your message confused with that of a partner.



